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11-8-2005

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Originally published in *Archive for Reformation History* 96 (2005), pp. 33-56.

The *Archive* is published under the auspices of Verein für Reformationsgeschichte and the Society for Reformation Research. <http://w3fp.arizona.edu/archive/>

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# Basel and the Wittenberg Concord\*

By Amy Nelson Burnett

Walther Köhler ended his classic account of the eucharistic controversy, *Zwingli und Luther*, with a description of the synod of Swiss theologians that met in Zurich in April of 1538. Held almost two years after the signing of the Wittenberg Concord, the synod was Martin Bucer's last opportunity to persuade the Swiss to continue negotiations for eucharistic concord with Luther. Bucer had reason to hope for positive results from the synod, for at least some of the Swiss were open to further discussion. The delegates from Basel, Bern, St. Gall, and Mulhouse supported a favorable response to a recent letter from Luther on the issue, while Schaffhausen's instructions told them to remain neutral. Only Zurich and Biel opposed an open statement of agreement with Luther. Nevertheless, Zurich's determined opposition was sufficient to win the day. The synod resolved to send a friendly letter to Luther but refused to continue discussions concerning the sacrament. Bucer's efforts to reconcile the Lutherans and the Swiss had failed, and the breach between the two parties on the Lord's Supper would not be mended. As Köhler put it, "Concord with the Swiss had foundered." Ernst Bizer used the same metaphor in his description of the synod, concluding more pointedly that "the concord foundered on the Zwinglianism of the Swiss."<sup>1</sup>

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\* Research for this paper was supported by a grant-in-aid from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Research Council and by a fellowship from the Alexander-von-Humboldt-Stiftung. The author would like to thank the staff of both the Bullinger Briefwechsel Institut in Zurich and the Bucer Forschungsstelle in Heidelberg for providing transcriptions of Bullinger's and Bucer's unpublished correspondence. - Abbreviations: - *BDS*: *Martin Bucers Deutsche Schriften*, Gütersloh 1960 ff. - *BSRK*: E. F. K. Müller, *Die Bekenntnisschriften der reformierten Kirche*, Zurich 1987. - *BStA*: Basel Staatsarchiv. - *BUB*: Basel Universitätsbibliothek. - *CO*: Jean Calvin, *Calvini Opera Omnia quae supersunt*, Corpus Reformatorum 29-87, Braunschweig, 1863-1900. - *HBBW*: *Heinrich Bullingers Briefwechsel*, Werke, Abteilung 2, Zurich 1973-. - *TB*: *Thesaurus Baumianus* (MS 660-683), Bibliothèque nationale et universitaire, Strasbourg. - *Vad BS*: *Vadianische Briefsammlung, 1508-1540*, Emil Arbenz and Hermann Wartmann (eds.), St. Gallen 1884-1913. - *WABr*: *Martin Luthers Werke. Briefwechsel*, Weimar 1930-1967. - *ZStA*: Zürich Staatsarchiv. - *ZZB*: Zürich Zentralbibliothek.

1. Walther Köhler, *Zwingli und Luther: Ihr Streit über das Abendmahl nach seinen politischen und religiösen Beziehungen*, 2 vols., Gütersloh 1924-1953, 2, pp.512-518: "die Konkordie mit den Schweizern war gescheitert"; Bizer, *Studien zur Geschichte des Abendmahlsstreits im 16. Jahrhundert*, Darmstadt 1962, pp.210-228; citation at p.233: "Die Konkordie ist am Zwinglianismus der Schweizer gescheitert."

The Zurich synod thus marked the end of Bucer's efforts to win the Swiss to the cause of eucharistic agreement. This does not mean, however, that those efforts had no long-lasting impact in Switzerland. In fact, Bucer had already achieved a notable triumph in Basel. In the wake of the Wittenberg Concord, the leader of Basel's church, Oswald Myconius, became one of Bucer's most loyal defenders and disciples in Switzerland. His adoption of Bucer's eucharistic theology put Basel on a path that would eventually lead to accusations of "Lutheranizing" and to the distancing of that city's church from those of its Swiss allies.

### I. BASEL'S SUPPORT FOR THE WITTENBERG CONCORD

From the outbreak of the eucharistic controversy, Basel's church was clearly allied with Ulrich Zwingli and Zurich. Johann Oecolampadius, the head of Basel's church, was a close friend of the Zurich reformer, and he contributed significantly to the polemical exchanges on the sacrament during the later 1520s. The strong theological alliance between the two churches continued after the deaths of both Oecolampadius and Zwingli in 1531. Oswald Myconius was, if anything, even more closely associated with Zwingli, for he was a teacher and colleague of Zwingli's in Zurich through most of the 1520s. Fearing an anti-Zwinglian reaction there after Zwingli's death, Myconius moved to Basel, and in early 1532 he was elected to succeed Oecolampadius as pastor of the city's cathedral parish. In his role as leader of Basel's clergy, he sought contact with Heinrich Bullinger, his new counterpart in Zurich, and he quickly became one of the latter's most faithful correspondents.<sup>2</sup>

Myconius remained a staunch supporter of Zwinglian theology throughout the early 1530s, as Bucer's campaign for eucharistic concord reached its climax. Although he was not unalterably opposed to concord, Myconius shared Bullinger's reservations about the possibility of concord with Luther. As late as the spring of 1536 he still had doubts about the Strasbourgers' efforts.<sup>3</sup> But

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2. Willy Brändly, "Oswald Myconius in Basel," in: *Zwingliana* 11 (1960), pp. 183-192; on the circumstances under which Myconius became the head of Basel's church, Friedrich Rudolf, "Oswald Myconius, der Nachfolger Oekolampads," in: *Basler Jahrbuch* (1945), pp. 14-30.

3. See, for example, his reaction to Ambrosius Blarer's signing of the Württemberg Concord, in his letters to Bullinger from 17 Sept. 1534 (*HBBW* 4, pp. 323-324, no. 442), 9 Oct. 1534 (*HBBW* 4, pp. 349-351, no. 455); on Myconius' distrust of the Strasbourgers, 29 April 1536 (*HBBW* 6, pp. 257-258, no. 811).

the Wittenberg Concord, signed in May 1536, brought Myconius to an important turning point, both theologically and personally.<sup>4</sup>

Myconius' first reaction to the articles of the Wittenberg Concord, like that of the Zurichers, was negative. Despite pressure from the magistrate to endorse the Concord, the memorandum that he and Simon Grynaeus presented to Basel's ruling council, the XIII, in mid-July 1536 was unfavorable.<sup>5</sup> Within a few short weeks, however, Myconius' attitude had changed. A trip to Strasbourg to consult with Bucer and Wolfgang Capito won Basel's theology professors, Simon Grynaeus and Andreas Karlstadt, to the goal of concord. The two men returned home with Bucer's explanation of the Wittenberg Concord, which gave a distinctly Zwinglian slant to its contents, and with Bucer's response to four specific objections that had been raised by the Baslers. Myconius was initially suspicious of the contents of these documents: "The declaration states our position, although with deceitful words ... I am surprised if this is Luther's position. If so, he has approached us and not we him."<sup>6</sup> Despite these reservations, the Basel clergy met and on August 2 approved the Wittenberg Concord as it was interpreted by Bucer.<sup>7</sup> Over the next few months, the Baslers became Bucer's strongest supporters in Switzerland. In August Myconius and Grynaeus went first to Zurich, then to Bern, to win support for the Concord; they defended Bucer's Christology; they tried to soften the anger of the Swiss over Bucer's "Retractions," published in the fall of 1536; and they urged Bullinger to use his influence to prevent attacks on Bucer by his colleagues in Zurich and his supporters in Bern.<sup>8</sup>

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4. J.-V. Pollet does not make this point explicitly, but it can be inferred from his chapter on Bucer and Myconius, based largely on Myconius' correspondence with both Bucer and Bullinger, *Martin Bucer. Études sur la correspondance*, 2 vols., Paris 1958-1962, 2, pp. 335-367.

5. Myconius to Bullinger, 19 July 1536, *HBBW* 6, pp. 367-369, no. 866.

6. Myconius to Zwingli, 31 July 1536, *HBBW* 6, pp. 377-378, no. 871.

7. *BDS* 6/1, pp. 217-218. The date of August 2 is given on several later copies of Bucer's explication of the Concord. The pastors' response, stating that they found the explanation to accord with the city's own Basel Confession, was read at a meeting of the Senate on August 5, 1536; BStA Kirchen Akten A 4, fol. 161.

8. On the trips to Zurich and Bern, see Köhler, 2, p. 493; on Bucer's Christology, Grynaeus to Bullinger, 20 Nov. 1536 (*HBBW* 6, pp. 469-470, no. 913), and 30 Nov. 1536 (*HBBW* 6, pp. 485-487, no. 923); on the "Retractions," Myconius to Bullinger, 3 Feb. 1537 (*HBBW* 7, p. 48, no. 942) and 27 Mar. 1537 (*HBBW* 7, pp. 113-116, no. 977); for Bullinger's intervention with his colleagues and with Bern, Myconius to Bullinger, 26 Aug. 1535 (*HBBW* 6, pp. 407-408, no. 885), Simon Grynaeus to Bullinger, 27 Mar. 1537 (*HBBW* 7, pp. 119-120, no. 979), and Myconius' reference to the corre-

Already at the end of December, Bullinger expressed the fear that Basel would go its own way in the Concord negotiations.<sup>9</sup> Basel's commitment to mediation between Bucer and Bullinger would be put to the test in the spring of 1537. A Zurich stipendiate studying in Strasbourg forwarded to Bullinger a purloined copy of Bucer's and Capito's letter to Luther, written to accompany the common response of the Swiss cities to the Concord in January of that year. In that letter the Strasbourgers asked Luther not to take offense at their explanation of the Concord, in which they had "accommodated [their words] to the weakness" of the Swiss. They attributed the opposition to the Concord in Zurich and Bern in part to those who used "the least occasion to accuse the preachers of relapsing into papism." The constitution of these cities made the situation even more difficult since all decisions had to be made with the approval of the large council of citizens, while the more "aristocratically governed" cities of Basel, St. Gall, and Mulhouse could consent to the Concord without such worries.<sup>10</sup>

The letter proved to be the proverbial last straw for Bullinger: the Zurich reformer saw his distrust of Bucer's intentions fully justified, and the relationship between the two men was irreparably damaged.<sup>11</sup> Bullinger forwarded copies of the Strasbourgers' letter to his evangelical allies. The letter only hardened Kaspar Megander of Bern in his opposition to Bucer and the Concord negotiations. From St. Gall, Joachim Vadian also criticized Bucer for the disrespect shown to the Swiss churches, but he counseled Bullinger to suppress the letter lest it cause further scandal; Johann Zwick of Constance shared the latter's opinion.<sup>12</sup> Only the Baslers came to Bucer's defense: both Grynaeus and Myconius wrote lengthy letters in which they interpreted the Strasbour-

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spondence between Grynaeus and Leo Jud (to Bullinger, 14 Mar. 1537, *HBBW* 7, pp. 101-102, no. 970).

9. Bullinger to Myconius, 16 Dec. 1536 (*HBBW* 6, pp. 496-497, no. 928); Megander repeated this fear in a letter to Bullinger (8 Mar. 1537, *HBBW* 7, pp. 93-96).

10. Capito and Bucer to Luther, 19 Jan. 1537, *WABr* 8, pp. 12-18, no. 3128.

11. On the difficult personal relations between Bucer and Bullinger, see Kurt Jakob Rüetschi, "Bucer und Bullinger in ihren persönlichen Beziehungen," in Christian Krieger and Marc Lienhard (eds.): *Martin Bucer and Sixteenth Century Europe. Actes du colloque de Strasbourg, 28-31 août 1991*, 2 vols., Leiden 1993, 1, pp. 429-439.

12. Megander to Bullinger, 11 April 1537 (*HBBW* 7, pp. 138-143, no. 990); Vadian to Bullinger, 31 Mar. 1537 (*Vad BS* 7, pp. 68 f., no. 53); Zwick to Bullinger, 16 May 1537 (*HBBW* 7, pp. 152-154, no. 994).

gers' letter in the most positive manner possible, defending Bucer's integrity and stressing the difficult position he was in as the mediator between two parties.<sup>13</sup>

If the Strasbourgers' letter to Luther brought about a permanent change in the relationship between Bullinger and Bucer, it was also the beginning of a change in the close friendship between Bullinger and Myconius. In September of 1537, Myconius and Grynaeus accompanied Bucer and Capito to Bern, where Bucer was able not only to justify his Concord efforts but also to revise the Bern catechism, written by Megander, so that it reflected the eucharistic teachings of the First Helvetic Confession.<sup>14</sup> Over the next few months the radical Zwinglian party in Bern, led by Megander, Erasmus Ritter, and Johannes Rhellikan, sought Zurich's support against the spread of the "epidemic of Buceranism" that had struck their church.<sup>15</sup> Bullinger and his colleagues did what they could to support the Zwinglian party but to no avail: the catechism was printed with Bucer's modifications. The Bern council removed Megander from office for refusing to accept the modified catechism. He returned to Zurich with his reputation enhanced as one who had suffered for upholding pure doctrine. Six months later, after ensuring that he had a job in Zurich, Rhellikan also resigned his teaching position in Bern.

The events in Bern had important repercussions for Basel. In early October, Myconius described the many problems plaguing the Bern church to Bullinger and asked him to use his influence with the Zwinglians there to moderate their agitation.<sup>16</sup> As we have seen, the Zurichers took exactly the opposite course, doing all they could to support Megander and his colleagues. By early January it was clear to the Baslers that they and the Zurichers were diametri-

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13. Myconius to Bullinger, 11 April 1557 (*HBBW* 7, pp. 138-143, no. 990) and Grynaeus to Bullinger, 11 April 1537 (*HBBW* 7, pp. 143-148, no. 991).

14. On the Bern synod of September, 1537, and Bucer's revision to the catechism, see Rainer Henrich, "Ein Berner 'Kunzechismus' von 1541. Bucers verloren geglaubte Bearbeitung des Meganderschen Katechismus," in: *Zwingliana* 24 (1997), pp. 81-94.

15. Throughout their letter to the Zurich pastors and teachers, the Bern Zwinglians used the metaphor of disease to describe the impact of Bucer's teaching on the Bernese church, 28 Nov. 1537 (*HBBW* 7, pp. 317-323, no. 1074); cf. also the letters of the Bernese pastors to the Zurich pastors, 23 Sept. 1537 (*HBBW* 7, pp. 243-251, no. 1045), of Megander to Bullinger, 11 Nov. 1537 (*HBBW* 7, pp. 297-299), and of Ritter to the Zurich pastors, 21 Dec. 1537 (*HBBW* 7, pp. 332-337, no. 1081), as well as the letters of the Zurich pastors, 28 Nov. 1537 (*HBBW* 7, pp. 310-317, no. 1073) and of Bullinger to the *Venner* Peter Im Haag, 5 Dec. 1537 (*HBBW* 7, pp. 327-329, no. 1078).

16. Myconius to Bullinger, 4 Oct. 1537 (*HBBW* 7, pp. 260-262, no. 1052).

cally opposed in their views of the situation in Bern.<sup>17</sup> One consequence was a growing distance between Bullinger and Myconius. Bullinger responded coldly to Myconius' support for Bucer; he was equally unmoved by Grynaeus' letters.<sup>18</sup> The formerly frequent exchange of letters between Zurich and Basel seems to have dwindled to a trickle during the first half of 1538.<sup>19</sup> Over a month after the April synod, Bullinger wrote a short note to Myconius apologizing for not having shown greater friendship to the Basler during his visit to Zurich. He blamed the apparent neglect, as well as his failure to write, on the press of other business. Myconius accepted Bullinger's apology, but it is clear that he still felt slighted; in August he complained to Vadian that he and Grynaeus had lost the Zurichers' friendship because they defended the Strasbourgers.<sup>20</sup>

This was only the first of several occasions when the friendship between the two men seemed strained. Myconius' growing sensitivity to possible insults by Bullinger has been attributed to his old age and increasing physical disabilities, or to his exaggerated sense of insecurity or inferiority vis-à-vis his counterpart in Zurich. While all of these factors may have played a role, a more important source of these difficulties was the changing relationship between the Swiss and Strasbourg churches and their leaders in the context of Bucer's Concord efforts. Where in the early 1530s Myconius could write to the younger Bullinger as an equal, by 1538 their opposing positions on the issue of concord no longer made that relationship possible. Bullinger's role as the chief defender of Zwingli's theology had been confirmed in the negotiations that surrounded the formulation of the Wittenberg Concord. Myconius, however, had been reduced in the eyes of the Zurichers to Bucer's spokesman. The contrasting positions of Bullinger and Bucer on the importance of agree-

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17. Cf. Bullinger to Myconius, 23 Jan. 1538 (*HBBW* 8, pp. 38-39, no. 1094), with Grynaeus' comments to Myconius written at the bottom.

18. Cf. Bullinger's comparison of his attitudes to Bucer and Osiander, 3 Dec. 1537, (*HBBW* 7, pp. 325-326, no. 1077), in response to Myconius' query on 26 Nov. 1537 (*HBBW* 7, p. 3079, no. 1071); Grynaeus to Bullinger, 1 Mar. 1538 (*HBBW* 8, pp. 100-101, no. 1108) and Bullinger's response, 30 Mar. 1538 (*HBBW* 8, pp. 116-117, no. 1118).

19. Myconius wrote two letters to Bullinger in January, to which Bullinger responded in late February; there are no surviving letters written until June.

20. 4 June 1538 (*HBBW* 8, p. 145, no. 135); Myconius' response, 18 June 1538 (*HBBW* 8, pp. 152-153, no. 1139); Bullinger apologized again a month later, 26 July 1538 (*HBBW* 8, pp. 176-177, no. 1150); Myconius to Vadian, 22 Aug. 1538 (*Vad BS* 5, pp. 502-504, no. 1020).



ment with the Lutherans, and Myconius' support for the latter, meant that Basel would gradually be pulled away from Zurich and towards Strasbourg.

## II. MYCONIUS ON THE LORD'S SUPPER

In November of 1537, as the conflict between the Zwinglian and Bucerian parties in Bern was reaching a climax, the Basel *Bürgermeister* Jakob Meyer wrote to Bullinger suggesting that they both do all within their power to have the most provocative preachers from each side removed from office. Meyer believed that the solution to Bern's problems was to adhere to the teaching of the First Helvetic Confession, adopted by the Swiss cities in early 1536. He could not avoid conveying a sense of smugness as he boasted to Bullinger that, "praise be to God, we have peace in our city and countryside because our preachers teach faithfully according to the content of the same [i. e., the First Helvetic Confession] ... Where there is controversy, we need to present a sure measure that we can stand by, and because we use the Confession not only [as a statement] for other people, but have also introduced it into our church and put it into effect, we aren't worried about reviving the same content, even though it uses different words ... I am increasingly aware, as the Strasbourgers have said, that the church must be diligently taught the contents of this Confession, or there will be no concord; and we have experienced how people will accept its contents if they are faithfully taught it, as is done here."<sup>21</sup> For Meyer, it was vital that Basel's citizens be led to understand the sacrament in accordance with the formulation of the First Helvetic Confession. But in fact, an examination of Myconius' preaching and teaching demonstrates that the position on the sacraments that was taught in Basel was not so much that of the First Helvetic Confession as it was that of the Wittenberg Concord.

The Wittenberg Concord's article on the Lord's Supper began by citing Irenaeus' words "that in the sacrament there are two things, one heavenly and one earthly," and that "with the bread and wine, the body and blood of Christ are truly and essentially present and are offered and received." The article further rejected transubstantiation, the local inclusion of Christ's body and blood in the elements, and the reservation of the consecrated host in tabernacles or its being carried in processions, "as happens in the papacy." Nevertheless, through sacramental union the bread is the body of Christ, so that when the bread is offered, the body of Christ is similarly (*simul/zu-*

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21. 26 Nov. 1537 (*HBBW* 7, pp. 304–306, no. 1070).

*gleich*) present and offered. Moreover, the sacrament's value did not rest on the worthiness of either the minister who offered it or the person who received it. Because St. Paul had said that the unworthy also partook of the sacrament, the South Germans also taught that the unworthy were truly offered and truly received the body and blood of Christ. These received the sacrament to judgment, however, for they misused it when they received it without true repentance and faith.<sup>22</sup>

In the explanation of the Wittenberg Concord that he wrote to make the Concord more palatable to the Swiss churches, Bucer elaborated on two points. First, he repeated several times that the heavenly element of the sacrament was received by the believing soul. Second, he clarified that the unworthy (*indigni*) who ate judgment upon themselves, were not the same as the impious (*impii*). Because they lacked faith, the impious could receive only the earthly elements of bread and wine but not the body and blood of Christ.<sup>23</sup>

Let us turn now to Myconius' understanding of the sacrament. In 1538 the Basel Antistes published his only biblical commentary, on the Gospel of Mark. His comments on the Last Supper led naturally to a discussion of the Lord's Supper. After a reference to the Passover meal as a prefiguration of the sacrament of the Eucharist, Myconius considered the meaning of the words of institution. Christ's words were to be understood simply as referring to his true flesh and blood. Myconius rejected the two extreme interpretations: that of the papists, who made the elements into Christ, and that of the Anabaptists, who saw only the bare symbols without Christ. The truth, he said, lay in the middle: to believe that when we eat the bread, we also eat Christ's body, joined with the bread in a sacramental way. Although he acknowledged problems with the term *sacramentally*, Myconius stated that there was no other or better way to explain the substance of the sacrament. To say that the bread was the body of Christ sacramentally was to say that the body of Christ was present and presented with the bread.<sup>24</sup> That which the bread signified was

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22. BDS 6/1, pp.121–126. Ulrich Gähler has discussed the significance of Calvin's concession to Bullinger that *simul* meant not *simultaneously* but *similarly* in the negotiations that preceded the Consensus Tigurinus, "Das Zustandekommen des Consensus Tigurinus vom Jahre 1549," in: *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 104 (1979), pp. 321–332.

23. Declaratio articulorum germanica, BDS 6/1, pp. 209–216; cf. the explanation of the articles written specifically for Basel, pp. 218–226.

24. In *Evangelium Marci docta et pia Osvaldi Myconii Lucernani, iam primum in lucem edita expositio*, Basel 1538, fol. 150v: "Esse autem corpus Christi sacramentaliter

present and given by Christ through the minister. To counter a symbolic interpretation of the words of institution, Myconius repeated that we should simply believe Christ's words. "We eat the Lord's flesh with the mouth of the believing soul or mind, and who could doubt what kind of eating this is, whether earthly or celestial?"<sup>25</sup>

Myconius also tried to find a middle way on the issues that divided Lutherans and Zwinglians. He dismissed the christological objections of the latter. The fact that Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father did not prevent the eating of his flesh and blood in the supper: "Heaven, where Christ is, is everywhere, and he fills and perfects all things." Against the Lutherans, however, he insisted that what Christ offered in the Supper was accepted by virtue of faith, "for Judas received bare bread and pure wine, nothing more."<sup>26</sup>

Myconius also took up the distinction between the unworthy and the impious. He distinguished three types of people: those who heard and kept God's Word; the unworthy, who heard the Word and believed but were preoccupied by the things of the world; and the impious. The unworthy lacked justifying faith, but they could not be considered unbelievers, for there was hope of their eventual reform. The impious, however, heard only empty words, not God's Word, and they received only bread and wine in the sacrament.<sup>27</sup>

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(liceat hac uti voce, quemadmodum & alijs, dummodo ad explicationem rei non sit alia, seu melior) hinc certum, quia Christus, Hoc, dicens, et panem demonstrat. Et quid illud, inquis, sacramentaliter panis est corpus Christi? Nihil aliud quam, pane mystico praesens est & corpus Christi, & eo pane porrecto, porrigitur & corpus Christi."

25. Ibid., fol. 152r: "Coelestis est igitur ratio, secundum quam se nobis offert, non terrena, quamobrem ut a nobis ea non potest comprehendi, sic videtur esse non anxie nimis inquirenda, nam postquam constat, quod edimus ac bibimus Dominum vocare corpus suum, et sanguinem suum, quicquid tandem id sit, sive carnis efficacia, sive virtus substantialis, qualiter per similitudinem solis quidam docent, sive quidpiam aliud, nos arbitror decere, simpliciter verbis Domini credere firmiterque haerere, ne deficiamus a fide, quae primas tamen in hoc tenet negotio utque confirmantur conscienciae nostrae; et ne dubitare videamur de potentia Christi. Quod autem ad nos adinet, carnem edimus Dominicam ore fidelis animae seu mentis. Et cui potest esse dubium, qualis nam sic hic esus, terrenus ne, an coelestis?"

26. Ibid., fol. 152r: "Coelum etenim, in quo Christus habitat, eiusmodi est, ut inde impleat, ac perficiat omnia. Quia vero saepe iam dictum, fidei virtutem accipere, quicquid Christus in coena nobis offerat ac praebeat, constat, quibus nam cibus hic sit paratus, nempe fidelibus, quales fuerunt discipuli Domini, qualesque Corinthij, Iudas enim nudum hic panem accepit, ac merum vinum, preterea nihil."

27. Ibid., fol. 152v-153r: "Nam negari non potest, quin tria hominum genera ver-

Myconius then summarized the purpose of the sacrament. Christ wanted us to receive his body and blood in this way so that we would remember his benefits and give thanks, so that he could dwell in us and we in him, to admonish us to brotherly love and to increase our faith. Finally, he justified the length of his discussion "so that I can give an account of my faith, and that of the church entrusted to me," and stated his openness to the fraternal admonition of pious and holy men.<sup>28</sup>

Whether such admonition was fraternal or not, Myconius' views on the Lord's Supper would satisfy neither radical Zwinglians such as Megander nor radical Lutherans. However, it did lie within the parameters established by the Wittenberg Concord, along with Bucer's explanation. The contrast between things heavenly and earthly, the emphasis on sacramental union, and the distinction between the unworthy and the impious were all drawn from the Concord. At the same time, Bucer's explication allowed Myconius to retain the emphasis on the sacrament as food for the believing soul, received through the mouth of faith.

The influence of the Wittenberg Concord comes across even more clearly in a sermon Myconius preached at Christmas in 1543.<sup>29</sup> Myconius opened the

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bum audiant. Primi quidem audiunt, et custodiunt, et ideo Dominus beatos tales pronunciat ... Alij quod dicitur intelligunt, et credunt, corde tamen non recipiunt, rebus huius saeculi praepedientibus, quocirca nec agunt pro doctrina verbi, Annon tales aliquatenus possunt dici fideles? Verum quia fides ea debito caret fructu, non est vera, non est fides iustificans apud Patrem coelestem. Indignos itaque verbi auditores adpellare tales non credo quempiam horrere, interim tamen, quia verbi veritas placet, relinquunt spem melioris in posterum vitae, quamobrem nec inter infideles computantur, aut impios ... Postremi verbum audiunt, sed nec intelligunt, nec credunt: imo tam non curant, ut non adeant, ob intelligentiam seu fidem, sed ut satisfaciant vel hominibus, vel consuetudini. Tales non possunt non inter impios numerari, quod verbum negligentes Deum certo contemnant." Myconius' distinction among the three types also brings to mind the parable of the sower, Mark 4: 13-20.

28. Ibid., "Haec de sacramento coenae Domini pro confessione nostra communi paulo pluribus exponere libuit, ut rationem redderem fidei circa illam & meae, & Ecclesiae mihi commissae, ut ea cognita viri pij ac sancti, siquid esset vel negligentius expensum, vel dictum non pro mente Christi, fraterne admoneant in veritate Dei, quam unice volumus, et inquirimus," fol. 154r.

29. The sermon exists in two manuscripts in the BUB, MsKiAr 22a, fol. 238r-242r, and MsKiAr 23a, fol. 282r-288r; I have used the latter manuscript. The sermon is dated only "1543." The Lord's Supper was celebrated in all of the city's churches on Christmas, hence a sermon on the sacrament would have been appropriate for the festival. In his letter to Bullinger, Myconius says that "locum Pauli de communicatione corporis et sanguinis Christi in coena diligentius me explicasse, dein duo haec intulisse, quod duplicem coenem habentes non sint de corpore Christi et praesentes, si non communicent

sermon with a consideration of what was eaten in the Supper. Citing Paul's account in I Cor. 11, Myconius stated that the sacrament consisted of two things, the earthly elements of bread and wine and their heavenly counterparts, the body and blood of Christ. The word *hoc* or *this* referred to both the bread, which is perceived with the senses, and the body of Christ, which is perceived through faith. In the sacrament, the soul was fed with Christ's body, which was offered, given, and eaten in a heavenly way. According to Myconius, this view was taught not only by Luther and the princes of "the evangelical alliance," but also by Zurich.

In the second part of the sermon, Myconius argued that Christ's body was eaten through faith. Just as one ate bread with the mouth, so one ate the body of Christ through the believing soul or heart. Without faith, one received only the sacramental bread. Although he did not use the words *unworthy* or *impious*, Myconius differentiated between the Corinthians, who had faith but lacked repentance and brotherly love and so ate judgment on themselves, and Judas, who was without faith and received eternal death. For those with faith, Christ's body and blood were offered by Christ himself through the minister. The body of Christ was not locally enclosed, as the papists taught; nor did it remain in the consecrated host to be reserved in a tabernacle or monstrance or carried in processions.

In the final, and longest, section of the sermon, Myconius discussed why we receive the sacrament. The Lord's Supper gave Christians the opportunity to thank and praise God for his benefits through Christ, and it strengthened their faith and reassured their hearts of forgiveness. Myconius particularly emphasized the moral implications of the sacrament: proper consideration of its meaning led to repentance and the intention to lead a new life, and its reception testified to brotherly love and unity.<sup>30</sup>

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*absque iusta causa, modo coenae mysteria cognoscant probare se non esse membra ecclesiae domini, et pluma leviores et dolio pertuso futiliores sunt.*" This matches the contents of the manuscript sermon. The manuscript makes no mention of Oecolampadius, but from Myconius' description, it is likely that this was a last-minute addition to the sermon when it was delivered rather than an integral part of the sermon as it was originally written.

30. The structure and contents of the sermon are matched very closely by Myconius' confession on the Lord's Supper also in BUB, MsKiAr 23a, no. 84, fol. 209r-218r. Here Myconius also states that Christ's body and blood are eaten in the sacrament; they are eaten by the believing soul or heart, along with the bread, and they are eaten for the purposes of thanksgiving, the mortification of the old man, and a new life in Christ, and for furthering brotherly love. The confession is undated but is part of a larger document that also contains a confession on the Lord's Supper by Myconius' col-

Although interesting in itself, this sermon is also important because of the reaction it provoked in Zurich. In February 1544, Bullinger wrote a sharp letter to Myconius, signed in the name of the Zurich pastors. Some Zurich citizens "of known piety" who had been in Basel for the November fairs had complained to him that Myconius was teaching differently than he had once taught in Zurich. He had preached "that the body of the Lord Jesus was truly present in the Supper and corporally eaten by the participants in an ineffable way; for we shouldn't inquire into the manner." These words were bad enough, but at Christmastime Myconius had gone even further by claiming that Oecolampadius believed the same about the Eucharist as Luther did. Bullinger and his colleagues were gravely offended: hence the letter in which Bullinger demanded that in future Myconius "teach about the Supper more circumspectly and in greater agreement with apostolic simplicity." He then proceeded to lecture Myconius on how to understand the sacrament: it was certainly apostolic to say that Christ was present for his church, but to move beyond this to assert Christ's corporeal presence in the Lord's Supper was to corrupt apostolic purity. Moreover, it was contradictory to say that the Lord was corporally present in the Supper but in a manner that was ineffable and not tied to place (*illocabilem*). The Lord's body is in heaven, not on earth. Oecolampadius rejected this ineffable manner of Christ's presence, and Myconius was well aware of what the Zurichers taught about the location of Christ's body in their confession and in their writings against Luther. As a final insult, although it was phrased as a concession to Myconius' heavy workload, Bullinger thanked Myconius for boarding Zurich's stipendiates but announced that henceforward they would be given housing "with another honest citizen."<sup>31</sup>

We should keep in mind the larger context of Bullinger's criticism. It was not simply happenstance that the visiting merchants had reacted so strongly to Myconius' sermons, for after several years of relative quiet, the fragile truce between Luther and the Swiss was crumbling. Luther's attack on Zwingli in his letter to the Zurich printer Christoph Froschauer that fall had brought the issue of the sacrament to the fore and made the Zurichers sensitive to any deviation from what they understood as true doctrine.

Myconius was not without his defenders, however. In a letter to Bullinger, the Basel pastor Johannes Gast tried to excuse his colleague by pointing to his

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league Wolfgang Wissenburg as well as a confession by Petrus Tossanus and the pastors of Montbéliard from 1544.

31. Bullinger to Myconius, 12 Feb. 1544, ZStA EII 342, fol. 115.

age: Myconius was forgetful and easily irritated, and he had been provoked by an unnamed individual to discuss the Eucharist with such zeal, even if he had cited Oecolampadius out of context in order to demonstrate the latter's agreement with Luther.<sup>32</sup> Even the Zurich stipendiates who lived with Myconius wrote to Bullinger to defend their host: Wolfgang Haller told Bullinger that Myconius had never tried to "infect" them with his opinion. Haller stated that he was indeed familiar with the views of Myconius, Bucer, and Luther, but "neither Myconius nor the gates of hell" would ever persuade him to accept the corporeal presence of Christ in the Supper.<sup>33</sup>

When he finally responded to Bullinger a month later, Myconius expressed his own anger through heavy irony, noting the "new and unusual tone" of the letter, sent not as from a friend but in the name of all the Zurich pastors. Nor could he resist making an aside about Bullinger's informants: "They certainly must have good memories if they know what I then taught [in the Zurich church], especially about the Supper, for I don't remember ever having discussed the topic: I was a school teacher, and had more responsibility for school matters than for theology."<sup>34</sup>

Myconius' self-defense also contradicted the picture Gast painted of a forgetful and crotchety old man. The Basel Antistes stood by his sermons, not only those heard by the Zurich merchants, but all those he had preached over the last twelve years, and which had until this point been criticized only by Anabaptists. Throughout his ministry he had taught in accordance with what was contained in Scripture; with the common confession of the Swiss cities (a reference to the First Helvetic Confession); with Bucer in his *Bericht auß der heylige Geschrift*, which Bullinger himself had once approved; and with what he had published in his commentary on Mark. He summarized his understanding of the Lord's Supper in this way: "In this public assembly, with the bread Christ feeds us with his own body and with the wine he gives us his blood to drink, not in a crass way and as the Capernaïtes think, but in a celestial and spiritual way, but nevertheless true; and this truth should be believed,

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32. Gast to Bullinger, 15 Feb. 1544, ZStA EII 366, fol. 260. One wonders if such an apology did more harm than good to the Zurichers' attitude towards Myconius.

33. Wolfgang Haller to Bullinger, 22 Feb. 1544, ZZB F62, fol. 310.

34. ZStA EII 347, fol. 279 ff., 12 Mar. 1544: "Valent certe memoria, si norunt, quod ego tum docuerim, praesertim de coena; equidem non memini saepius illud argumentum me tractasse; ludimagister eram, quamobrem scholaria magis quam theologica curabam." Myconius was a bit ingenuous here: he was indeed a schoolteacher rather than a pastor during his years in Zurich, but he also lectured on the New Testament during the later 1520s.

not inquired into. For it is something to be believed, not examined, when I say 'in an ineffable manner,' by which Christ, seated at the right hand of the Father, renews to life his own in this holy Supper by means of his body and blood."<sup>35</sup>

Myconius then turned to the Christmas sermon that had caused so much offense. He had cited Oecolampadius in order to refute the accusations of someone who was spreading rumors that Myconius taught more crassly concerning Christ's presence than had Oecolampadius. To counter this lie, Myconius reported, he had quoted one of Oecolampadius' letters and stated that on this point Oecolampadius agreed with the letter Luther had sent to the Swiss cities.<sup>36</sup> Myconius went on to assert that the Wittenberg Concord contained nothing new that could not be found in the writings of Oecolampadius and Zwingli, in the Tetrapolitan Confession, and especially in the First Helvetic Confession. Myconius granted that Oecolampadius could be contentious and vehement in his polemical works aimed at the papists and at Luther when he thought the latter was still mired in papistic errors; but the founder of Basel's reformed church could be more peaceful in his letters and in his own confession of faith, where he stated that "Christ was sacramentally present, and truly present to those who truly believe."<sup>37</sup>

Myconius also claimed that he agreed with Zwingli in interpreting the *is* of the words of institution as *signifies*, although he stressed that he had always understood Christ to be present in the sacrament. He had never agreed with the Anabaptists that the sacrament consisted only of empty signs but was perhaps teaching this more clearly now than he had in the past. If the Zurich visitors claimed that he had said that Christ was corporally present and eaten in the Supper, they had misunderstood him since he never spoke in this way.

This very brief summary of Myconius' sermon, together with Myconius' response to Bullinger, confirms the Basel Antistes' wholesale endorsement of the Wittenberg Concord, particularly as Bucer interpreted its articles for the Baslers. In many respects, the sermon itself is an explanation of the Concord, beginning with its discussion of the heavenly and earthly components of the

35. Myconius repeated this confession almost verbatim in a letter to Melancthon, dated 9 June 1544, and published in Pollet (see n. 4), 2, pp. 368–369.

36. Myconius was here referring to Luther's response to the First Helvetic Confession, written in December 1537, *WABr* 8, pp. 149–153, no. 3191.

37. "In his," inquit [sc. Oecolampadius], "quae ad sacramentum pertinent coenae, confiteor animas nostras per fidem in mortem Jesu Christi carne et sanguine pasci et potari .... non autem corpus Christi nunc vel localiter vel dimensive, sed sacramentaliter adesse et sic Christum vere credentibus vere adesse."



sacrament – which Myconius, like the Concord, attributed to Irenaeus. Myconius' references to Christ's offering his body and blood through the minister, as well as his rejection of reserving the host or carrying it in processions, were also allusions to the contents of the Concord. I have already mentioned the way Myconius differentiated between the *indigni* and the *impii* of the Wittenberg Concord. His claim that the text contained nothing not found in Oecolampadius's and Zwingli's writings was taken from the heading of one of the first documents explaining the Concord to reach Basel in July 1536. Likewise, his assertion that Christ's body and blood are not perceived with the senses or reason echoed Bucer's explication of the Concord in a document written specifically to answer the questions raised by the Basel pastors.<sup>38</sup>

The ironic tone that Myconius assumed, particularly when combined with Gast's negative comments about his colleague, might lead someone who had not read Bullinger's initial letter to conclude that the Basel Antistes was indeed getting old and unduly sensitive. Given the high-handedness of Bullinger's rebuke, however, Myconius' indignation can be seen as justified. His careful citation of sources – and his uncited but clear reliance on the Wittenberg Concord as interpreted by Bucer – demonstrates that he knew precisely what he was teaching, and he did not need to be instructed by Bullinger in how to understand the Lord's Supper. There is indeed considerable continuity between Myconius' discussion of the sacrament in his Mark commentary and in his sermon.

This disagreement over the sacrament was enough to strain the long friendship between the two churchmen. In June 1544 Myconius complained to Vadian about his estrangement from Zurich: no one wrote to him anymore except for Bullinger, and then only when he was compelled to do so.<sup>39</sup> The situation went from bad to worse when Gast reported to Bullinger at the end of November that Myconius was preparing a new catechism. Basel certainly needed an improved catechism. The one written by Oecolampadius was very brief and sufficient only for young children. Although the curricular plan for the newly reorganized city Latin schools required that older children learn

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38. *BDS* 6/1, pp. 209–226. Myconius had apparently forgotten his own criticism of Bucer's claim that the Wittenberg Concord taught nothing new; see n. 5 above. Neither Myconius nor Gast gives enough information to identify Oecolampadius' letter concerning the Lord's Supper, but it may well have been the letter to Nikolaus Prugner which Bucer included in yet another defense of the Wittenberg Concord, written in the fall of 1536, as well as in his "Retractions" to the third edition of his Gospel commentary; *BDS* 6/1, pp. 245–246.

39. Myconius to Vadian, 7 June 1544, *Vad BS* 6, pp. 326–327, no. 1349.

the catechism in Latin, there was no official Latin translation. Thus Myconius resolved to translate Oecolampadius' catechism, expanding it in the process to include more doctrinal detail. The six questions Myconius added on the Lord's Supper were a concise presentation of the ideas expressed in his commentary and his sermon. In the sacrament, we eat "what the words of the Lord's Supper say: with the sacrament of bread the body of Christ, and with the sacrament of wine the blood of Christ," and this "not in a natural way and manner but with the believing soul." This expanded version, published in German as well, became the standard catechism for Basel's urban and rural churches.<sup>40</sup>

The doctrine contained in the catechism, then, was enormously influential in shaping the religious beliefs of the next generation of Baslers. Bullinger was well aware of the importance of a doctrinally correct catechism, and he was apparently so apprehensive about any changes Myconius might introduce that he asked to see the catechism. This time he avoided direct confrontation and assumed a tone of personal concern. In March 1545 he sent Myconius a copy of the just-published *True Confession of the Ministers of Zurich's Church* and then added, "But why, my dear brother Myconius, do you not send me anything that you produce? I hear you have published a catechism. If I were to act this way, you would soon suggest that I had less love and concern for you."<sup>41</sup> Myconius was not taken in by Bullinger's patronizing tone. In his response he referred to Bullinger's "joke" about wanting to see such a little work.<sup>42</sup> Again, while Myconius might seem hyper-sensitive to criticism, this

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40. Oecolampadius' original catechism is reprinted in Ferdinand Cohrs, *Die evangelischen Katechismusversuche vor Luthers Enchiridion*, Hildesheim 1978, pp. 3-17. The revised Oecolampadius/Myconius catechism is printed, with minor modifications adopted by the church of Mulhouse, in Johann Michael Reu, *Quellen zur Geschichte des kirchlichen Unterrichts in der evangelischen Kirche Deutschlands zwischen 1530 und 1600*, vol. I/1: *Süddeutsche Katechismen*, Hildesheim 1976, pp. 155-167. The Oecolampadius/Myconius catechism was included in the various editions of Basel's liturgical agenda over the next several decades.

41. 14 Mar. 1545, ZStA EII 342, fol. 465: "Qui autem fit, Myconi frater colende, ut nihil eorum, quae a te prodeunt, mihi mittas? Audio te vulgasse Catechismum. Si ego ita agerem, mox suggereres te minus amari et curari." Bullinger also sent copies of the confession to Gast and to Martin Borrhaus (he identified the book in his letter to the latter, also 14 March; ZStA EII 346, fol. 145). The Latin Confession sent to Myconius was *Orthodoxa Tigurinae Ecclesiae ministrorum Confessio* ..., Zurich 1545.

42. "Tria verba D. Oecolampadii reddidi pro viribus Latina. Cur ideo dicis illud? Obprobras, quod non ad te miserim? Cur mitterem aliena, imo tantilla? Num, ut darem aliquid novi, vel ut te oblectarem vel ut afficerem gaudio, quod Myconius etiam scriberet libros? Ridiculum; sed docuit te momus aliquis sic ludere, et si non docuit, ex-

sensitivity makes sense when placed in the context of the tensions over the Lord's Supper of the previous year.

Two points stand out from this summary of Myconius' views. First, Myconius was obviously concerned that he not be charged with teaching that the sacrament consisted only of empty signs and an absent Christ. The refutation of this charge was one goal of the Wittenberg Concord, and the accusation itself continued to be made against Zwinglians throughout the 1540s.<sup>43</sup> It was also a live issue in Basel in 1543, where negotiations were underway that eventually would lead to the appointment of Martin Cellarius/Borrhaus as professor of Old Testament. In June of that year, Myconius expressed his fears about Borrhaus in a letter to Bucer and Melanchthon, who were at that time working together in Bonn. In his *De operibus Dei*, Borrhaus had taught that the sacraments were only signs, and for years he had abstained from receiving the Lord's Supper in Basel. According to Myconius, he had only recently received the sacrament for the first time at Pentecost, when he was angling for the chair in theology.<sup>44</sup> Borrhaus was indeed appointed to the Old Testament post the following year. Ironically, the wording of the Wittenberg Concord may have enabled Borrhaus to claim that he agreed with Basel's understanding of the sacrament. He could interpret the Concord's distinction between things heavenly and earthly, joined in sacramental union, in a way congenial to his own dualistic spiritualism.<sup>45</sup>

Second, and related to this first point, is Myconius' rejection of Bullinger's Christology. The Basel Antistes made it very clear, both in his commentary

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emplo tamen suo induxit." 19 March 1545, ZStA EII 336, fol. 212. The draft of this letter is even sharper in tone; ZZB F81, fol. 396.

43. It was, for instance, raised against the Zwinglian party in Bern; cf. Erasmus Ritter's rejection of this claim in a letter to Vadian, 27 Aug. 1541, *Vad BS* 6, pp. 65–69, no. 1196.

44. Myconius recounted a conversation about Borrhaus with one of the latter's supporters, 25 June 1543; TB 14, fol. 74r–75r: Dum dico, "dogmatibus scatet non sanis": protinus illi: "tanto tempore jam fuit apud nos, quid dogmatum sparsit? Quanam sunt illa: indicentur," et dum ego: "Nuda sine Christo sacramenta tenet in Coena Domini-co." Illi: "Tamen in dei Pentecostes nobiscum communicavit." "Verum est," inquit, "sed quot annis non communicavit?"

45. See *Martini Borrhai in Mosem, divinum legislatorem, paedagogum ad Messiam Servatorem mundi, Commentarij*, Basel 1555, pp. 991–1000; and even more strongly in his *In Sacram Iosuae, Iudicum, Ruthae, Samuelis & Regum Historiam, mystica Messiae servatoris mundi adumbratione referatam, Martini Borrhai Commentarius*, Basel 1557, col. 167–180. For an overview of Borrhaus' theology, including a summary of *De operibus Dei*, see Irena Backus, *Martin Borrhaus (Cellarius)*, Baden-Baden 1981.

and in his brief confession to Bullinger, that he did not accept the argument that Christ's body was circumscribed in one place in heaven and so could not be present in the Supper. In light of Myconius' understanding of the sacrament, it is hardly surprising that the 1547 edition of the Basel Confession eliminated the marginal gloss on the Lord's Supper, which stated that those receiving the sacrament "did not draw Christ down from the right hand of God according to his human nature."<sup>46</sup> And Myconius' negative reaction to the signing of the Zurich Consensus of 1549 rested as much on theological grounds as it did on the more personal insult of having been excluded from the negotiations. Shortly after the text of the Zurich Consensus became known in Basel, Lelio Sozzini reported to Bullinger that Myconius objected to the Consensus' last section – which contained the statement that Christ's body is locally contained in heaven.<sup>47</sup>

It is striking that two of Bucer's three objections to the Consensus concerned precisely the issues here highlighted. Writing from exile in England, Bucer chided Calvin for avoiding the words used by Christ and by Scripture and preferring instead language giving the impression that Christ was absent from the Supper. Likewise he disapproved of the explicit statement that Christ's human nature remained in heaven.<sup>48</sup> The parallel between Bucer's objections and the emphases of Myconius' later statements on the Lord's Supper show how deeply the Basel Antistes was influenced by his Strasbourg friend.

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46. The marginal glosses themselves became the subject of controversy in the 1570s, when the question of their origin arose; Karl R. Hagenbach, *Kritische Geschichte der Entstehung und Schicksale der ersten Basler Konfession*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Basel 1857, pp. 34–35. Frank Hieronymus argues that this first edition of the confession without the gloss on the Lord's Supper was printed in the early 1550s, after Simon Sulzer became Antistes, but he does this primarily because of Sulzer's reputation as a Lutheran; he does not consider that Myconius may have had theological grounds for removing the gloss; "Gewissen und Staatskirchentum. Basler Theologie und Zensur um 1578," in: *Archiv für Reformationgeschichte* 82 (1991), pp. 209–238.

47. Socinus to Bullinger, 8 July 1549, CO 13, col. 322–323, no. 1221; cf. Müller, *BSRK* 163. Paul Wernle misses the theological significance of Myconius' objections to the Consensus and focuses instead on the personal insult that Myconius felt at being ignored by the parties who drew up the Consensus; *Calvin und Basel bis zum Tode des Myconius, 1535–1552*, Basel 1909, pp. 75–79.

48. Bucer to Calvin, 14 Aug. 1549, CO 13, col. 350–358, no. 1240.

## III. THE WITTENBERG CONCORD AND BASEL THEOLOGY

Myconius' clear and careful adherence to the Wittenberg Concord had significant consequences for the theological direction of the Basel church. The endorsement of the Concord by Basel's pastors would not have been so important if the Concord had had no practical impact on the preaching and teaching of the city's clergy.<sup>49</sup> But thanks to Myconius, the theology of the Wittenberg Concord was inculcated through both sermons and theology lectures during the later 1530s and 1540s. Even in the wake of the new tensions caused by the publication of Luther's *Short Confession* in 1544, Myconius reassured the Strasbourgers that his church would stand by the Wittenberg Concord.<sup>50</sup>

Myconius' loyalty to Bucer raises larger questions about the confessional identity of the Basel church. Descriptions of Basel's church in the later sixteenth century routinely emphasize the "Lutheranizing" policies of Simon Sulzer, the pastor who succeeded Myconius as Basel's Antistes in 1553.<sup>51</sup> Given Sulzer's reputation as a Lutheran, it seemed natural to attribute Myconius' negative opinion of the Zurich Consensus to Sulzer's malign influence.<sup>52</sup> This

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49. In this respect, Basel's endorsement of the Wittenberg Concord differed significantly from the official adoption of the first Helvetic Confession by the Swiss cities in 1536. Bucer accused both Bullinger and the Bern clergy of not holding to the First Helvetic Confession's statement on the Lord's Supper; cf. Bucer to Vadian, 21 Feb. 1545, *Vad BS* 6, pp. 396–397, no. 1384.

50. Myconius to Conrad Hubert, 28 Jan. 1545, BUB Fr Gr II 9, no. 322.

51. The traditional view of Basel's "Lutheranizing" tendency is most recently summarized by Hans R. Guggisberg, "Das lutheranisierende Basel. Ein Diskussionsbeitrag," in Hans Christoph Rublack (ed.): *Die Lutherische Konfessionalisierung in Deutschland*, Gütersloh 1992, pp. 199–201. Sulzer's reputation as a Lutheran dates from the sixteenth century itself, and was in part the fruit of the bitter controversies that dated from Bucer's intervention in Bern. Sulzer led the pro-Bucer faction in that city during the 1540s, which earned him the enduring hostility of Zurich's theologians. Sulzer's role in ending the predestination controversy in Strasbourg in 1563 was interpreted as another sign of his Lutheran convictions; see Amy Nelson Burnett, "Simon Sulzer and the Consequences of the Strasbourg Consensus in Switzerland," in: *Archiv für Reformationgeschichte* 83 (1992), pp. 154–179.

52. On the basis of Farel's intimations to Calvin, Wernle blamed Sulzer for Myconius' reaction to the Consensus, ignoring the theological implications of Calvin's account of the situation. The Genevan reformer blamed Bullinger for creating tensions between Zurich and Basel, since the Zurich Antistes had told Calvin it was not necessary to visit Basel to discuss the Consensus with the ministers there; Wernle, *Calvin und Basel*, pp. 75–79. Calvin's statement rings true in light of the theological differences between Basel and Zurich: Bullinger suspected that Myconius would object to provisions of the Consensus and so delayed informing the Baslers of its contents. Bullinger's

view cannot be sustained, however, in light of the theological commitment of Myconius and of the church he led at mid-century. In fact, Myconius and Sulzer were united in their support for Bucer's eucharistic theology. The theological direction of the Basel church was not the result of Sulzer's machinations in the 1550s but was determined already in 1536, when Bucer won Myconius to the theology of the Wittenberg Concord.

The continuity between Myconius and Sulzer may tempt us to read later developments back into earlier ones and to see Myconius, and the Basel church as a whole, as moving in a Lutheran direction during the later 1530s and 1540s. Certainly the Basel Antistes' admiration for Luther increased over the last fifteen years of his life. In a letter to Bucer in the fall of 1538, he stated, "Concerning Luther's commentary, I would say for myself that I have seen nothing more pious in my entire life ... This commentary causes the man to grow in my eyes, and I approach his books with much greater diligence and reverence."<sup>53</sup> Nor did Myconius' new respect for Luther go unnoticed by his contemporaries. Heinrich Pantaleon, who was both a pastor and a colleague of Myconius at the university during the 1540s, later reported that "whenever the question concerning the presence of the body of Christ came up now and again, he inclined to Luther's position and frequently explained the reasons for this from the word of God."<sup>54</sup> Myconius disagreed with what would become the position of Reformed orthodoxy by emphasizing the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Supper, and consequently rejecting the Reformed insistence on the local presence of Christ's body in heaven. Last but not least, the Lutherans endorsed the Wittenberg Concord and included it in their Book of Concord, but the other Swiss churches never accepted it.<sup>55</sup>

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own justification for not seeking Basel's endorsement of the Consensus – that Basel had recently published its own Confession, which made it unnecessary for the city to sign yet another confession – was little more than a smokescreen to avoid making the Baslers' differences with Zurich public knowledge. Bullinger certainly did not regard the existence of the Basel Confession as an adequate reason for Basel's refusal to sign the Second Helvetic Confession in 1563; see Hans Berner, "Basel und das Zweite Helvetische Bekenntnis," in: *Zwingliana* 15 (1979), pp. 8–39.

53. Myconius to Bucer, 16 Sept. 1538, TB 11, fol. 168r: "De commentario Lutheri pro me dixerim, nihil me vidisse magis pius per omnem vitam, Christum nempe simul cum Paulo suam facit scientiam et hanc saluta rem ... Facit igitur hic commentarius, ut vir ille crescat apud me magis magisque et libros ejus adeam longe majore diligentia ac reverentia."

54. Cited in Uwe Plath, *Calvin und Basel in den Jahren 1552–1556*, Zurich 1974, p. 177, n. 21.

55. James Kittelson with Ken Schurb, "The Curious Histories of the Wittenberg

Nevertheless, it would be misleading to identify Myconius' theology as Lutheran, for Myconius understood the Concord as it was interpreted by Bucer rather than by Luther. Bucer's explanation of the Concord written for the Baslers highlighted precisely those issues that were important for Myconius: Christ's body and blood were truly and essentially received, but they were not locally included or united with the elements, nor were they perceived by the senses. Furthermore, they could only be received through the believing mind.<sup>56</sup> This latter position separated him as clearly from the *manducatio impiorum* of later Lutheran orthodoxy as his rejection of Bullinger's Christology separated him from later Reformed orthodoxy. Myconius would not comfortably fit into either category, but during his lifetime he was not required to adopt a specific set of positions on the sacrament defined as "orthodox," whether by Lutherans or Reformed.

Myconius' theology must thus be understood within its proper chronological and confessional context. If anything, his statements about the Lord's Supper demonstrate that during the 1540s Reformed theology was still fluid enough to encompass a range of views, from Bucer's spiritual eating of Christ's real body and blood to the more symbolic position of such radical Zwinglians as Megander.<sup>57</sup> The latter group regarded any movement away from Zwingli's early theology as "Lutheranizing," but this did not mean that those who supported Bucer's efforts at agreement were in fact "Lutheran," as that term came to be defined a generation later, any more than concord-minded Lutherans such as Melancthon could be classified as "Reformed" on the basis of the condemnations of Philippists as Crypto-Calvinists during the 1570s. In the years between the signing of the Wittenberg Concord and the renewed outbreak of eucharistic polemics in the early 1550s, there was a theological middle ground where both groups could overlap.

This middle ground was attractive to Basel for many reasons. The most important consequence of Basel's endorsement of the Wittenberg Concord was that it moved the city's church away from Zurich's theological sphere of influence and allied it more closely with Strasbourg and the theology of the South

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Concord," in: *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 50 (1986), pp. 119–137; Köhler, *Zwingli und Luther*, 2, p. 452.

56. *BDS* 6/1, pp. 219–223; cf. also Bucer's "Declaratio articulorum germanica," *BDS* 6/1, pp. 210–211.

57. Despite his rejection of the circumscribed presence of Christ's body in heaven, Myconius' theology was closer to Calvin's than it was to Luther's, but even Calvin's eucharistic theology was suspect to the radical Zwinglians in Bern and Zurich during the 1540s; Gäbler (see n. 22), pp. 323–325.

German cities. Such a movement was not so radical a step as it might seem at first glance. Basel's membership in the Swiss Confederation dated only from the beginning of the sixteenth century. Even after "turning Swiss," the city's intellectual and economic elite maintained close ties with their counterparts across the Rhine. Many of Basel's pastors in the years after the Reformation were from Germany, not Switzerland. Basel's endorsement of the Wittenberg Concord could therefore be seen as the theological counterpart of what Julia Gauss has called "Basel's political dilemma during the time of the Reformation": the city's desire to find a middle way between the Empire and Switzerland.<sup>58</sup>

Although this middle way was still possible during the 1530s and 1540s, after Myconius' death it would cause increasing problems for Basel. The Wittenberg Concord rested on a series of ambiguities and strategic omissions that allowed for alternative interpretations. These ambiguities made the Concord acceptable both to Luther and to the South German theologians who signed it.<sup>59</sup> When the eucharistic controversy broke out again in the 1550s, the possibility of alternative interpretations vanished, as both Lutheran and Reformed theologians defined more precisely those issues left unclear by the Concord. The first casualty of the debate was the distinction between the *indigni* and the *impii* implied by the Wittenberg Concord. This distinction had allowed Myconius to assert at the same time the true presence of Christ's body and blood in the sacrament and the necessity of faith for receiving the benefit of the sacrament. The Swiss had never recognized a middle category between those with and those without faith, and the Lutherans now unambiguously equated *indigni* with *impii* – as, indeed, some of them had at the time of the Concord's signing.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, the elaboration of Lutheran Christology, and particularly the doctrine of ubiquity developed by Lutherans to explain the presence of Christ's body in the sacrament, made it no longer possible for theologians to avoid the question in the way that both Bucer and Myconius

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58. Julia Gauss, "Basels politisches Dilemma in der Reformationszeit," in: *Zwingliana* 15 (1982), pp. 509–548. On Basel's ties with Alsace and southern Germany before the Reformation, see Hans R. Guggisberg, "Die kulturelle Bedeutung der Stadt Basel im 16. Jahrhundert," in Helena Madurowicz-Urbanska and Markus Mattmüller (eds.), *Studia Polono-Helvetica*, Basel 1989, pp. 49–66.

59. Both Köhler, *Zwingli und Luther* (see n. 1), 2, pp. 453–455; and Bizer, *Studien* (see n. 1), pp. 121–130, discuss the ambiguities that covered the real differences in theology; Kittelson and Schurb, "Curious Histories" (see n. 55) also describe the Wittenberg Concord as a compromise, pp. 124–127.

60. Köhler, *Zwingli und Luther* (see n. 1), 2, p. 452.



tried to do.<sup>61</sup> Myconius endorsed Bucer's middle ground between Lutherans and Reformed; he did not live long enough to see that middle ground eaten away by the theological developments of the second eucharistic controversy.

After Myconius' death, Simon Sulzer tried to maintain the Basel church's mediating position between the increasingly polarized Lutheran and Reformed positions. In a letter to Johann Marbach written shortly after the publication of Calvin's *Defensio* against Joachim Westphal, Sulzer endorsed the teaching of "our Confession, which asserts the exhibition of the true body and blood with the bread and wine" – a reference to the wording of the Wittenberg Concord.<sup>62</sup> Sulzer was an ardent supporter of the plan for a German-Swiss synod promoted by Strasbourg in 1557, and in his own theology lectures he upheld the mediating view of the sacrament written by Beza and Farel in Göppingen for Duke Christoph of Württemberg that same year.<sup>63</sup>

In the face of sharpening confessional differences, however, Sulzer's efforts to maintain Bucer's mediating theology in Basel could not succeed. In 1571, after a fierce conflict over the Lord's Supper had broken out in the city's university and church, Basel's clergy again endorsed the Wittenberg Concord with Bucer's interpretation. This time, however, they did not accept it voluntarily but were compelled to do so by Basel's Council. Rather than preventing controversy, the Wittenberg Concord had itself become the object of contention.<sup>64</sup> The Formula of Concord proved to be the end of the Wittenberg Concord in Basel, for its statements left no room for ambiguity regarding the Lord's Supper. In tacit recognition of this fact, from 1578 the Wittenberg

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61. On the evolution of Lutheran Christology in the later 1550s, see Theodor Mahlmann, *Das neue Dogma der lutherischen Christologie. Problem und Geschichte seiner Begründung*, Gütersloh 1969.

62. Plath, *Calvin und Basel* (see n. 54), pp. 190–191; the text of the letter, dated 25 Mar. 1555, p. 283.

63. Sulzer's efforts in support of a Protestant synod are described by Gottlieb Linder, *Simon Sulzer und sein Antheil an der Reformation im Land Baden, sowie an den Unions-bestrebungen*, Heidelberg 1890, pp. 112–121; Gauss, "Dilemma" (see n. 58), pp. 509–548. In Sulzer's manuscript, "Propositiones Theologicae," preserved in the BUB (Ms A III 43, fol. 149r–v), the only discussion of the Lord's Supper is a citation of Beza's confession – for which Beza was roundly criticized by the Swiss; Salvatore Corda, "Bullinger e la confessione eucaristica di Göppingen (1557)," in Ulrich Gäbler and Erland Herkenrath (eds.): *Heinrich Bullinger 1504–1575. Gesammelte Aufsätze zum 400. Todestag*, Zürich 1975, pp. 109–122.

64. For a more detailed account of this incident, see Amy Nelson Burnett, "Generational Conflict in the Late Reformation: The Basel Paroxysm," in: *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 32 (2001), pp. 219–242.

Concord was no longer imposed on Basel's clergy. Instead, the pressure grew within the city to reassert its Reformed identity. After Sulzer's death in 1585, his successor Johann Jakob Grynaeus began the process of bringing the Basel church back into line theologically with its fellow Swiss Reformed churches.

For the space of a generation, Bucer had one firm ally among the Swiss churches in promoting a policy of eucharistic concord. Thanks to the loyal support of first Myconius and then Sulzer, the Wittenberg Concord survived longer in Basel than it did in Strasbourg, Bucer's home church. But the renewal of eucharistic polemics in the 1550s eventually made Basel's mediating theology untenable. The juggernaut of confessionalization forced the Basel church to choose sides, making the final victory of Reformed orthodoxy inevitable.

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## ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Bislang geht die Forschung davon aus, daß es Martin Bucer nicht gelang, im Abendmahlsstreit zwischen Luther und den Schweizern einen Kompromiß zu erzielen. Gänzlich erfolglos war er allerdings nicht. Denn unter der Führung von Oswald Myconius nahm die Baseler Kirche 1536 die Wittenberger Konkordie an. In den beiden darauffolgenden Jahrzehnten vertrat Myconius eine Abendmahlslehre, die sich an Bucers Interpretation der Wittenberger Konkordie orientierte. Myconius' Abendmahlstheologie stimmt weder mit der späteren lutherischen noch der reformierten Orthodoxie überein. Sie ist vielmehr ein Beispiel für die vermittelnde Theologie, die zwischen den beiden Phasen der Abendmahlskontroverse noch möglich war. Obwohl Myconius' Nachfolger Simon Sulzer weiterhin versuchte, die Bucersche Interpretation der Wittenberger Konkordie zu vertreten, wurde die vermittelnde Baseler Theologie in der wiederaufflammenden Debatte der 1550er Jahre unhaltbar.